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Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 26th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President) ..... (Belarus)

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(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (E/2008/46, E/2008/49, E/2008/60 and E/2008/83; and E/2008/CRP.4)

1. **The President**, opening the operational activities segment, said that the segment was critical to the Council's discussion of how the United Nations could further improve its development cooperation in preparation for the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held on 25 September 2008; the Doha Review Conference, to be held from 29 November to 2 December 2008; and the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008. The Council's task was to ensure that the Organization implemented initiatives in line with the recommendations contained in the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/62/208).

2. International development cooperation had changed in recent years with the emergence of new actors and aid modalities against a background of decline in official development assistance (ODA). The principles of national ownership and leadership were now at the core of efforts undertaken by the United Nations system, particularly those relating to the triennial policy review. The system needed to find its place in a changing environment and put its comparative advantages to best use. The policy review underscored that there was no one-size-fits-all approach to development and that United Nations development assistance should respond to the needs of programme countries in a manner fully consistent with their national development goals. The crises the world was currently experiencing and the impact of climate change threatened to reverse progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

3. During the general debate, participants would have an opportunity to exchange views about the way in which the United Nations system was preparing to implement the triennial policy review; he urged Council members to make the most of the mechanisms provided for in the policy review in order to ensure its effective implementation. The Council played a crucial role in coordinating the work of the system and in providing clear direction to United Nations funds and programmes concerning the implementation of policies set by the General Assembly at the national, regional and international levels; it should reflect on how it could perform its function even more efficiently, bearing in mind the recent policy review and the upcoming international development forums. The draft resolution for the operational segment (E/2008/L.12) was focused and well-balanced and should serve as an excellent basis for clear, action-oriented guidance to the United Nations system.

Statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

4. **The Deputy Secretary-General** said that the General Assembly's decision to conduct the triennial comprehensive policy review had shown the international community and the United Nations system that Member States were committed to the Organization's operational activities for development. It was critical to increase financial contributions to the United Nations system, notably to the core budgets, in order to help programme countries respond to the many challenges confronting them. It was also important to improve the system's coherence, effectiveness and relevance. At the national level, the United Nations needed to support the central role of the resident coordinators in improving the Organization's effectiveness in responding to country priorities; at Headquarters, business practices needed to be simplified and harmonized.

5. The recent reform of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) should enable the United Nations system to respond more coherently to the needs set out in the policy review. It was also possible to strengthen coherence based on the experience gained in the eight pilot countries of the One UN programme. The United Nations was working to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the policy review and was counting on Member States to do their part to enhance the effectiveness of operational activities for development.

6. Introducing the documents for the segment, she said that the report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities

for development of the United Nations system (E/2008/49) responded to the General Assembly's request for a workplan for clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time frames for implementing the resolution; she looked forward to the Council's views on the best way to put the resulting workplan into action.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits (E/2008/60), provided an overview of that system and the changes it had recently undergone; in particular, it examined the participation of United Nations development organizations. There again, the Council's guidance would be important, including in determining the themes and scope of the following year's report.

8. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (E/2008/46), the total value of contributions received by the United Nations system for operational activities in 2006 had amounted to US$ 17.2 billion, a 2 per cent decrease in real terms over the previous year. Core funding for 2006 had represented only 29.5 per cent of total funding, and expenditures of the United Nations system for operational activities in 2006 had totalled US$ 16.4 billion.

9. At the General Assembly's request, the report also highlighted steps for building a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system for United Nations operational activities for development. Overall, it was a reminder of the precarious funding situation of the United Nations development system. In the coming months, the Secretary-General would report on actions taken to improve the quantity and quality of funding for such activities.

10. The conference room paper on actions taken by the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies in the area of simplification and harmonization of the United Nations development system (E/2008/CRP.4) had been prepared in response to a General Assembly request for the executive boards and governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to assess simplification and harmonization measures. Although it would like to have been able to move more quickly, the United Nations system was strongly committed to progress in that area.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.25 a.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "The United Nations system in a changing aid environment: Implications and comparative advantages" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa. The panellists were Mr. Francis K. Butagira, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, Mr. Aiichiro Yamamoto, Resident Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency; Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund and Mr. Bruce Jenks, Assistant Administrator and Director, Partnerships Bureau, United Nations Development Programme.